UNITED NATIONS **S**

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1997/799
15 October 1997
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

LETTER DATED 15 OCTOBER 1997 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement issued by the Office of the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo clarifying the Government's position on the commission which is investigating allegations of human rights violations in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) André M. KAPANGA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

[Original: English]

Statement issued by the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 13 October 1997 concerning the investigation of human rights violations in the Congo

Dramatic changes have occurred in the Congo in the past year. All those who cherish justice and international peace must appreciate and welcome those changes which open the door for peace, stability and progress not only in the Congo, but also in the region and on the African continent as a whole.

Indeed, after decades of suffering, deprivation, the whole denial of their human, political and social rights and the plunder of their resources, the Congolese people had risen up in arms to win their victory over the Mobutu dictatorship, paying precious sacrifices in the process. The Mobutu regime was not only propped up by powerful international supporters who nurtured and defended it, but also by an assortment of regional allies and collaborators who saw their survival directly connected with its continued existence. In the same vein, Mobutu's Zaire was reduced to a sanctuary for myriad elements of destabilization, ethnic strife and genocide from the wide region surrounding the Congo.

These international and regional forces not only shared in the plunder of the resources of the country, but also participated directly in the repression of our people and the denial of their fundamental rights. As such, all the forces that contributed - in all forms, including in the name of "benign humanitarian" organizations - to the immense suffering of our people are responsible and stand accused of these grave violations.

While these are the true facts of the matter, a hostile campaign to tarnish the image of the new Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been under way for some time now. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo rejects these unjustified accusations that attempt to twist the incontrovertible realities and historical facts and clarifies its positions through the following points:

1. That external forces and their internal collaborators who felt that their interests would be jeopardized by the stability of the Great Lakes region have been fomenting hatred and animosity among the peoples of the region to inculcate genocide, destruction and impoverishment is a vivid reality that is only too fresh in our memories.

2. The futile attempts of the external and internal forces, who trampled upon the Congolese people, to use the country that was seething under Mobutu's dictatorial regime as a staging ground for concocting their plots to plunge the Great Lakes region into a vicious cycle of violence and genocide under the rubric of the refugee problem is another well-known fact which has moreover been corroborated by the report of the Security Council investigating commission.

3. As has been widely acknowledged, the fall of the Mobutu regime has come as a blessing to the Congolese people. At the same time, it represents a vital milestone in the march towards the stabilization of the Great Lakes region.

4. In this context, it must be recognized that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has embarked on a long journey to change the face and conditions of the Congo for the benefit and welfare of its citizens as well as to contribute to the enhancement of enduring peace and stability in the region.

5. Although the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is primarily working to extricate the Congolese people from abject misery, which they find themselves in, it will strive to promote regional peace and stability with necessary vigour and commitment.

6. The hard-won stability will remain precarious and fragile unless and until all the violations of human rights and atrocities perpetrated on the Congolese people - albeit in their name - and on the peoples of the region are accounted for in a comprehensive manner. As such and to ensure that justice prevails, all the tragic episodes of gross human rights abuses and atrocities should constitute grave matters that cannot be glossed over under any pretext but must be investigated rigorously to bring the sad chapter to an end. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is in the first line in this endeavour as it is the primary party to call for a comprehensive inquiry.

7. In so far as the modalities of the inquiry and the administration of justice are concerned, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo believes that all the regional actors must have a primary and active role so that the endeavour can contribute to an enduring and effective regional stability. In this spirit and framework, efforts are being exerted to ensure that the concerned regional forces create, as is indeed their responsibility, the necessary mechanism for the inquiry to take place.

8. In the endeavour that will be conducted through the active involvement of the concerned parties (as expressed in para. 7 above) any other Government, organization or individual that wishes to see justice done is welcome to contribute constructively.

9. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo strongly rejects attempts by those who are culpable in the first place, with the unfortunate cooperation of others, to pose as principal accusers. This posturing can only be prompted by the desire to cover up the atrocities and human rights abuses committed in the past or for other hidden agendas. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo invites all those who have the best interests of the Congolese people and the region at heart to support and participate in the measures that it has enunciated.